

Seattle **green guide**

A **Stranger** PUBLICATION

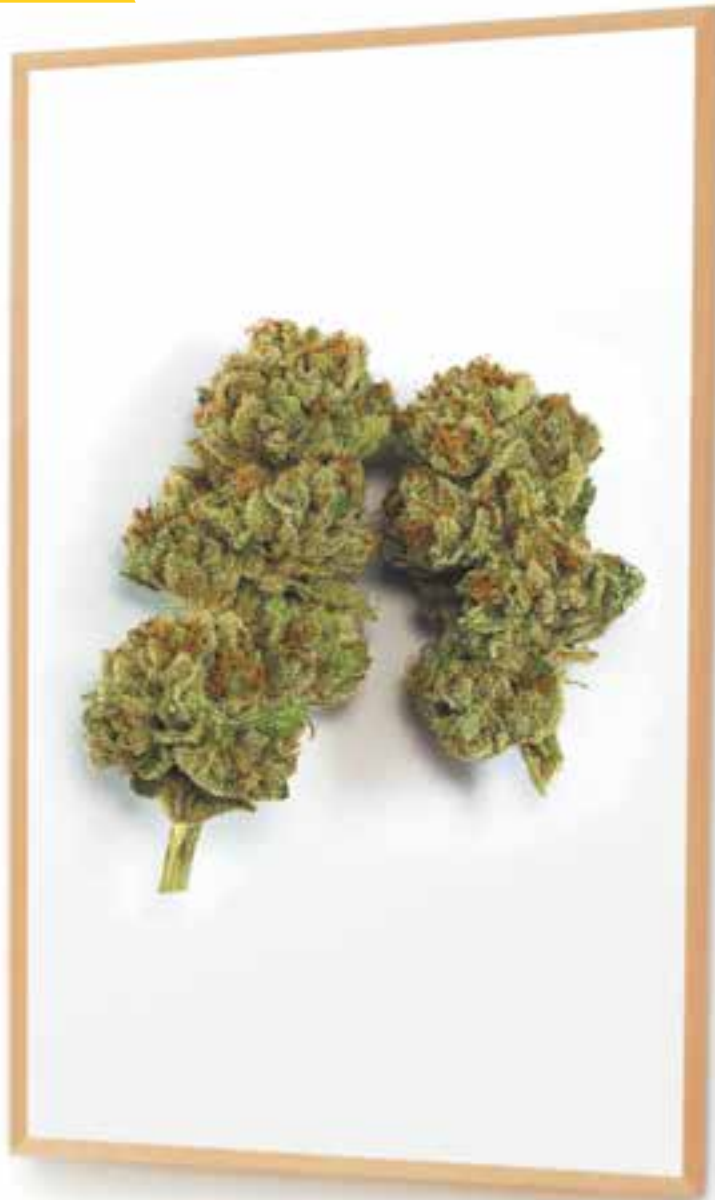
🌿 Fall 2017 – Winter 2018

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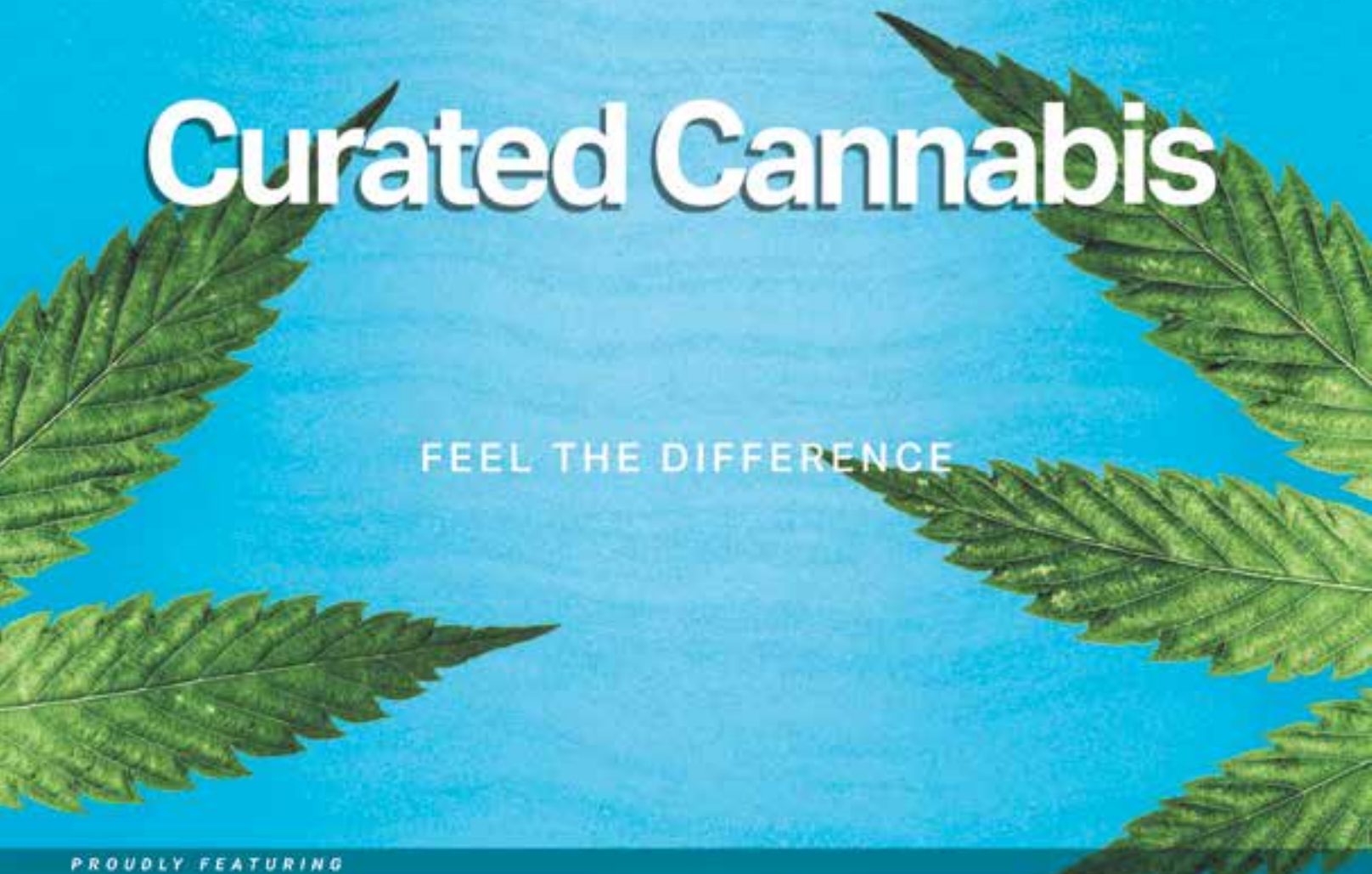
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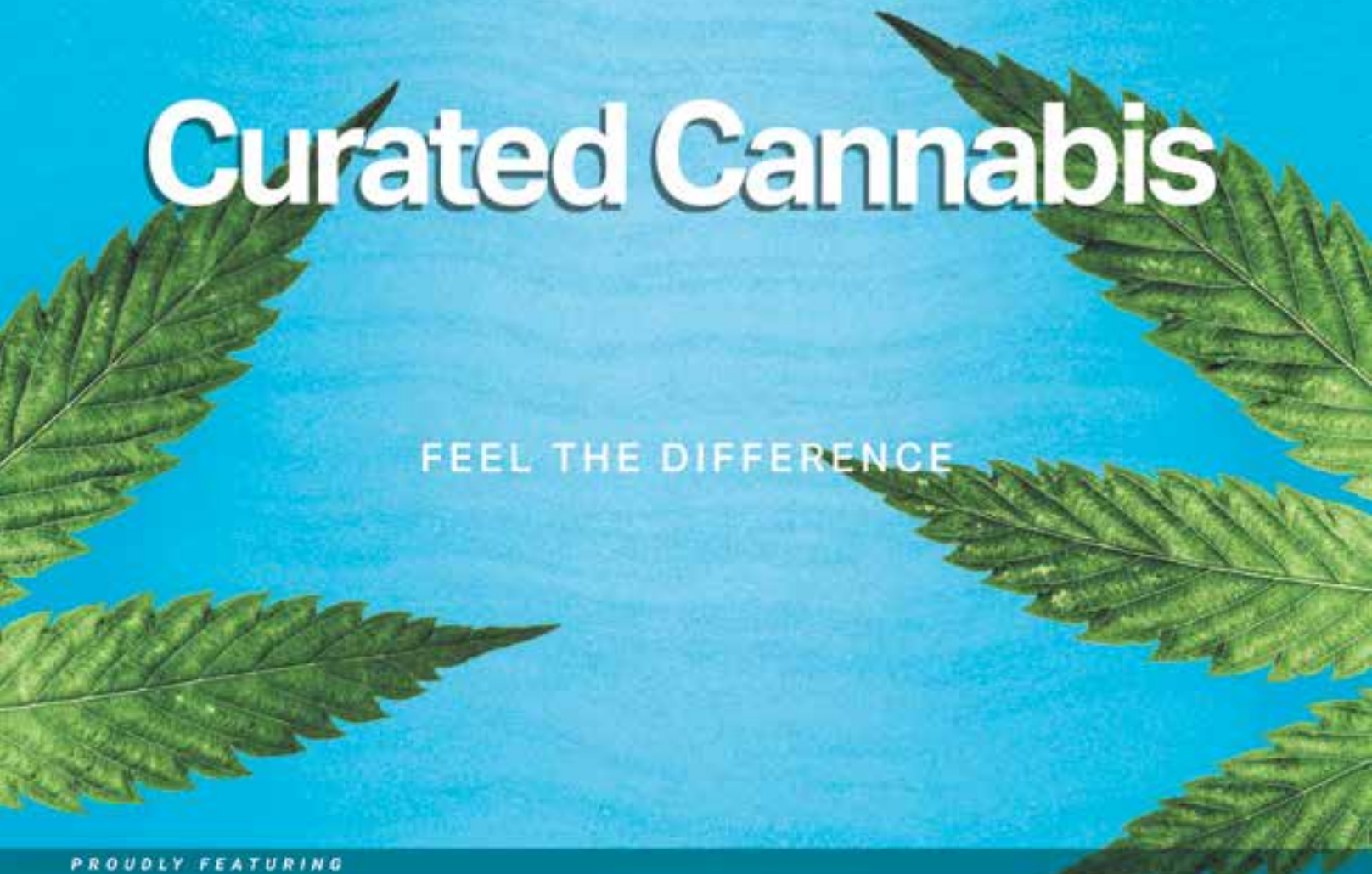
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CONTENTS

COVER ART

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Any dedicated pot smoker knows that the longer you smoke, the less you feel. So how should someone who's been smoking every day for 15 years go about getting high? Frances MacGregor, the biggest stoner we know, got some advice from a budtender and then did some experimenting. See what she found out on page 8.

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The edibles market is exploding. As you probably know, there's way more food out there now than your standard old-fashioned brownies and cookies. Amber Cortes taste-tested a few things, from tomato soup to a sparkling tonic to potato chips wrapped in chocolate, and she reports back on her favorite on page 25.

There are a ton of strains on the market in Seattle, a daunting array for anyone walking into a recreational store to choose from. Want to cut through the noise and try something exceptional? Lester Black has five recommendations for you, whether you're looking for something energizing, relaxing, or unusual. Find out what strains he liked best on page 18.

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Plus, the cannabis crossword puzzle! And a comic! Find them on page 52.



Meanwhile, in Eastern Washington, long-held conservative sentiments about cannabis are coming to blows with the huge economic boon that the crop provides—and the infighting is getting intense. Chelan County changed the rules about pot farms, effectively shutting them all down, so Lester Black took a road trip to find out more. Among the questions he explores: Can a person be allergic to a smell? Aren't the pesticides from tree fruit farming more dangerous than the dank aroma of weed? Why don't the protections for other kinds of farmers apply to pot farmers? Read his fascinating reporting on page 34.

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green guide

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Seattle

Fall 2017 - Winter 2018

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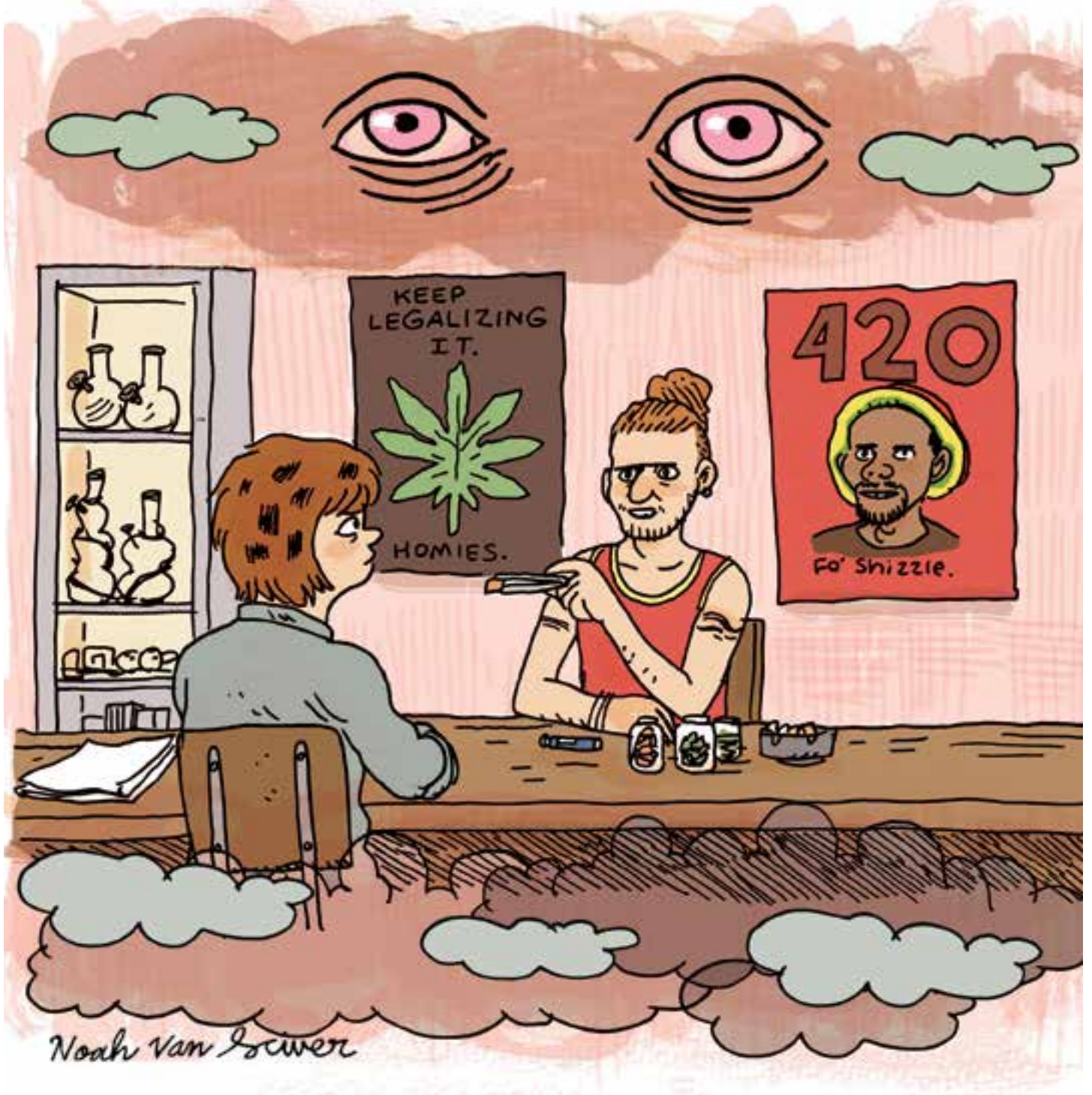
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HIGH TOLERANCE



How to get stoned and stay stoned when you've smoked weed every day for 15 years.

BY FRANCES MACGREGOR

For a brief time, I kept a spreadsheet of my monthly expenses. It had the usual entries: rent (\$650), utilities (\$80), and weed (\$250). This was years ago, when rent was still in the triple digits and instead of buying my weed from a “budtender” named Chad, I bought it from the drag queen up the street. My expenses have certainly gone up since then, but my weed habit has remained stubbornly the same all these years: \$250 a month, every month, forever. ►



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◀ You don't have to be good at math to see that's a lot of money. I could have purchased a new double-wide by now, easy. Even worse, these days most of that money goes up in smoke—after years of smoking weed all day, every day, I've plateaued. I just can't get high anymore. My financial adviser would be appalled at the amount I spend with so little return. And if I stopped buying all this weed, I could probably even *afford* a financial adviser.

Something must change. I came to this conclusion recently while looking at real-estate listings and realizing that the only property I can afford is a storage unit in Bremerton. *I should stop smoking*, I thought for a second before closing Redfin and coming to my senses. You don't give up on something you love just like that. It wasn't time to quit smoking; it was time to start smoking *smarter*. But how to get more bang for my bong?

To find out, I went for a consultation at Ponder, a pot shop in the Central District. Located just down the street from Uncle Ike's, Ponder is smaller, friendlier, and less controversial than its neighbor up the hill. Plus, Ponder's happy hour beats most places in town. From noon to 4:20 p.m. every day, everything is 15 percent off. For this reason alone, they get a large part of my weed budget.

Budtender Dan Potter knows my pain. Potter,

whose ginger hair was pulled back into a man bun, told me that the key to maintaining a buzz when you have a chronic habit is to alternate your delivery mechanisms—smoke flower one day and then go for hash or concentrate the next. That, I can do.

But then Potter offered another piece of advice: dabs.

That's what I was afraid of. Dabbing, a relatively new mode of ingesting cannabis, involves super-concentrated doses that have been extracted from the plant using solvents like butane or carbon dioxide. The resulting stuff, often called wax, shatter, or butane hash oil, looks kind of like honey gone bad, and it gets you really, really high. Potent flower may be up to 30 percent THC; dabs can be up to 90 percent and sometimes more.

Dabs—along with dance parties, hangovers, and all music—make me feel hopelessly old. Flower requires merely a match and a piece of rolling paper (or, if you don't have that, a pipe, bong, plastic bottle, aluminum can, apple, carrot, or page ripped from a Bible). Flower is simple.

Dabs require an expensive piece of machinery called a dab rig, as well as a butane blowtorch to heat it.

My only prior attempt at dabbing was several years ago, before the price of legal weed dropped low enough to convert me to retail. At the time, about a year after recreational shops started to pop up, I bought weed from a thirtysomething

dealer whose wardrobe hadn't been updated since high school. He wore massive wide-legged jeans that bled water four inches up his pant leg when it rained, and when he rolled up the sleeves of his hoodie, I saw arms covered in Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle tattoos. Mr. Friendly, as he called himself, lived in a basement apartment on Capitol Hill with a pirate flag cover-

ing the bathroom doorway and black and white striped wallpaper. While he was happy to deliver, I preferred to go to him—that way I could leave.

After selling me a quarter ounce one day, Mr. Friendly offered me a dab and said that it was the only way he smoked anymore. Flower just didn't do it. While I generally made my exit after exactly long enough not to appear im-

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◀lite, I knew better than to say no to drugs. Mr. Friendly rubbed his hands together and fired up the torch. *This, I thought, is this closest I will ever come to doing meth.* After the dab rig was hot, he dropped a grain-size ball of wax on the bowl—or nail, as it's called in dabbing—and I pressed my mouth to the pipe and inhaled. The smoke that moved from the nail to my lungs tasted strongly of chemicals. And as I coughed and sank back into his magenta pleather couch, Mr. Friendly took out his laptop and asked if I wanted to see pictures from his last road trip. I would have resisted, but I couldn't move.

Drug dealers in JNCO jeans are one thing I do not miss about the black market.

I told Potter, the budtender at Ponder, that my only dabbing experience had been less than ideal and also I was afraid that if I started dabbing, I'd never be able to go back to smoking regular old flower. Why make my tolerance problem even bigger?

He said that this is a legitimate concern, which is why alternating is key. Still, I wasn't ready to blow the entire *Stranger* weed budget on dabs, so I picked up some of Potter's other favorites: Lavender Hash from Soulshine, Sensi Star Hash Oil from Orgrow, Granddaddy Purple Vape Oil from Top Shelf, and 96 percent THC Distillate, also from Top Shelf. I would test

them, rate them, and, hopefully, find a combination that actually works.

Hash

My experiment started with littering hash over bowls of 27-percent-THC sativa that I smoked through a Nirvana bong I inherited from a friend. Had I not been littering bowls with the kief trapped in my grinder for the past decade, the hash may have had some effect, but it seemed I was immune to this as well. The hash did nothing. My girlfriend, however, whose job doesn't allow her to go home on lunch breaks, smokes less weed than I do. And so one evening before dinner, I lined a bowl with hash and told her to enjoy. Fifteen minutes later, she was standing at the freezer, spooning strawberry ice cream into her mouth and suggesting we move into a Sears van. (Rating: 🌿🌿🌿)

Distillate

I had more luck with the distillate, which came in a plastic syringe filled with 100 milligrams of golden THC syrup. At Ponder, I'd asked Potter if the syringe was a single dose, and he'd laughed. One hundred milligrams is about the amount that *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd

infamously ingested before spinning out into an existential weed crisis. Potter said that a lot of people put distillate in edibles—throw a little bit in some brownie batter and bake it up. But why take on the extra calories?

I ate the distillate direct from the syringe. While the taste and mouthfeel was pleasant enough (a little piney, a little slick), the 30 milligram dose I'd started with was clearly not enough. After two hours, I could easily have operated heavy machinery, so I took the other 70 milligrams and tried again. That was more like it. I wouldn't say that I got *scary* stoned, which was my goal, but I did fall asleep with my hand in a bag of tortilla chips. Still, distillate isn't ideal for everyday use. For one, it's expensive. One hundred milligrams of Top Shelf distillate cost \$25.50 at Ponder, which is fine if you require only a few milligrams to get stoned, but not if you have the tolerance of a lesser Marley brother. (Rating: 🌿🌿🌿)

Vape

Everyone loves a vape pen. They are easy and discreet, with no mess or fuss—you just insert your cannabis cartridge, press a button, inhale, and walk into your boss's office with no stink to give you away. But while the ease of vape pens cannot be matched, I've always found them less ▶

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◀ effective than plain old flower. I could suck on a vape pen all day and the only thing I'd get is a mouth sore. Sadly, the Granddaddy Purple I picked up at Ponder was no different. I might as well have been vaping air. Convenience is great, but getting high is better. (Rating: 🌿)

Dabs

It was time, finally, for dabs. I didn't have a dab rig, but I do have a neighbor with one, and I asked him if I could come over for a lesson. He suggested we meet at 4:20 p.m. the next Saturday. Perfect.

When I got to his apartment, his dab rig was set out on a side table along with a butane torch, a jar of Q-tips, and a small glass of water for cleaning. My neighbor, who works at X-Tracted Labs in Sodo, brought out a shallow square box lined with about 20 small glass jars with green and blue caps. These were the dabs, each one-gram X-Tracted vial going for about \$50 retail. The whole setup, he said, including dab rig, butane torch, and all the accessories, cost him between \$400 and \$500. So much for saving money.

The part that scares me the most about dabs is the torch. I've burned off my own eyebrows just from bong hits; a blowtorch would likely send me

to a burn ward. Thankfully, my neighbor volunteered to do the hard part for me. First, he demonstrated. He fired up the torch, heated the nail, and set his iPhone timer for 45 seconds. Too hot and it'll burn the goods, he said, plus waiting a little while helps the heat dissipate so you get a more even hit. Right at 45 seconds, he took a small glob of wax, smeared it around the nail, and inhaled while turning a "carb cap" around the rig, which brings oxygen to the dab. Afterward, he cleaned the nail—also called a banger—with water and Q-tips. "Always start with a clean surface," he said. "It's like eating off a clean plate."

It was my turn. Nervous, I followed his instructions and spooned some wax onto the banger, spun the carb cap, and breathed in. After my experience dabbing with Mr. Friendly, I expected to be laid out coughing at the very first inhale, but the X-Tracted dab was different. It was smooth, sweet, and lemony, with no harshness at all. It felt better in my lungs than a regular old bong hit. And it got me really fucking high. After three dabs—two from X-Tracted, plus the Sensi Star from Ponder, I was, as the youth say, lit. I stumbled home with my earbuds hanging from my ears, attached to nothing, wondering where the music went. Later, still high, I had one of those realizations that seem profoundly true in the moment: *I loved dabs*. They

are the essence of cannabis with everything else stripped away. I didn't need dumb old flower to get high. I needed a \$500 dab rig and a blowtorch of my own. (Rating: 🌿🌿🌿🌿)

Everything at Once

I was looking up dab rigs online when my buzz started to wear off, so I took Dan Potter's advice, alternating with a little bit of hash, then a hit off the vape pen, then the last little bit of 96 percent THC distillate from my Top Shelf syringe. It worked. I was, finally, after all that, scary stoned. The key, I realized, is to take everything at once.

Or is it? No matter how much you ingest, drugs, by their very nature, wear off. You can't stay stoned forever, and, really, why would you want to? When I woke up the next day with only a few vague memories of the 24 hours before, I decided to do something radical: I would take a break. The best way to lower your tolerance, after all, is simple: Don't smoke so damn much. And so far, I kind of like it. My brain doesn't feel fuzzy, I can actually remember my dreams, and I have hardly any desire to eat Doritos dipped in Nutella. It's only been 15 minutes, but when you smoke as much as I do, I'm thinking sobriety may be the most intoxicating state of being of all. ■



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Five Strains to Smoke Right Now



BY LESTER BLACK

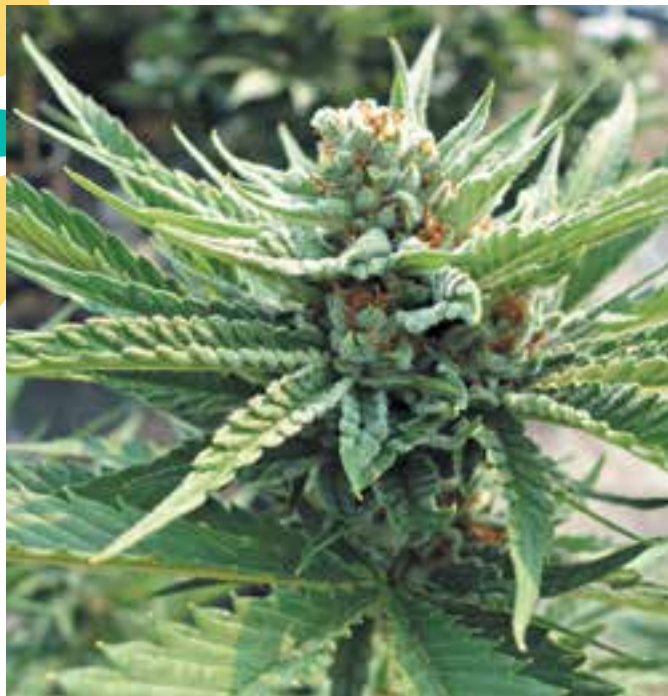
Cannabis is one of the most genetically diverse plants on earth. That diversity on the genetic level translates to a fantastic array of buds with dramatically different colors, aromas, shapes, and psychoactive effects. Nothing's worse than listening to a five-minute monologue from a budtender about some specific strain, only to have it turn out to be mediocre, so I've selected the following recommendations after talking to growers, retailers, and friends about their favorites—and trying them myself.

They are all fairly strong, not necessarily in the amount of THC listed on the package, but in their overall effect. I like strong weed. Also, pay attention to garden names. One farm's Maui Wowie is not likely to be the same as another farm's Maui Wowie. Even if the genes were identical, the actual buds would be modified by each farm's growing and curing processes. When you're looking for good weed, knowing which farms you trust is more helpful than knowing the names of strains you like.

Seatown Lemon Haze grown by Western Cultured

This is a fantastic version of Super Lemon Haze. It has an overwhelmingly sweet and lemony aroma, like a lemon-lime soda on a sunny day. The pretty nuggets have a vibrant green hue and a coating of white crystals. The plant's aromas keep exhaling around you as you pull it out of its bag and grind it up. It had a light and smooth smoke to it, didn't make me cough, and delivered a powerful, heady, mind-racing high. That's something I enjoy about these really citrusy strains—they make my mind run in circles. It's not for everyone, especially not the paranoia-prone. Barely half a bowl gave me the energy to stay up for a few hours editing and sorting photos and listening to the new War on Drugs album.

Whether you're looking for flower that's energizing, relaxing, or something more unusual, *The Stranger's* pot columnist has a recommendation for you.



Jack 47

grown by Green Barn Farms

Green Barn Farms' Jack 47 is some seriously feel-good weed. Its dense little nugs pop with aromas of skunky pine and lemon, and it delivers an easygoing, fun high. Plus, you can feel good knowing Green Barn Farms is Clean Green Certified—meaning they use organic-like standards—and that Jack 47 was grown outdoors, with only the natural sun on its leaves. Green Barn Farms is the only fully outdoor grower on this list. The strain gets its name from its famous parents, Jack Herer and AK-47. Jack Herer is probably responsible for this hybrid's pine aromas, while the AK-47 lineage contributes some skunkiness. All in all, it's a great outdoor version of a famous strain.

Orange Skunk

grown by
House of Cultivar

Truthfully, I recommend anything House of Cultivar sells—you can't go wrong with this farm. Touring their indoor garden in Seattle is like a crash course in the dramatic diversity of the cannabis plant. As I walked between rows of budding plants, I went from buds that smelled like sweet lemon-lime to buds that smelled like pine and old gym socks, from buds that were so dominated by banana aromas that if you closed your eyes you could be convinced you were smelling actual bananas to flowers that stunk of cheese.

House of Cultivar uses a fancy tissue-culturing program to create a "bank" of all of their strains, which helps explain the fantastically distinct range of flower they grow. It's difficult to choose one strain to recommend. But Orange Skunk might help you get through these dark months. It's almost as much ▶





◀ fun to smell as to smoke, with a powerful perfume of sweet orange and lime, as if God created a Fanta soda. Smoking it gave me an extremely energetic, fun, clearheaded high, with no munchies and no couch lock.


That said, the farm's flagship strain, Chem Mint Cookies, is an obvious recommendation as well. It's earthy and funky with powerful relaxant properties, great to end a long day with. If you're looking for something more intoxicating, even straight-up trippy, I recommend their Super Glue. It's covered in white crystals and has an aroma that reminded me of Elmer's glue on toasted bread.



Gelato grown by Canna Organix

Canna Organix claims to have exclusive genetics on their strain of Gelato, a cross of Sunset Sherbet and Thin Mint Girl Scout Cookies. It's hard to fact-check those types of claims, but their strain has developed a strong following in Washington. When you hear that customers are coming back constantly requesting a certain strain, that means there's something special going on.

The Sequim farm's Gelato is a beautiful bud covered in frosty white crystals and orange-red hairs. It smells like a pungent batch of herbs with some sweetness mixed in. It's strong bud, with a high that falls well outside of the indica-sativa paradigm. It got me very high, with both physical relaxation and energetic mental effects. If pot has felt weak and boring lately, this is one to try. ▶




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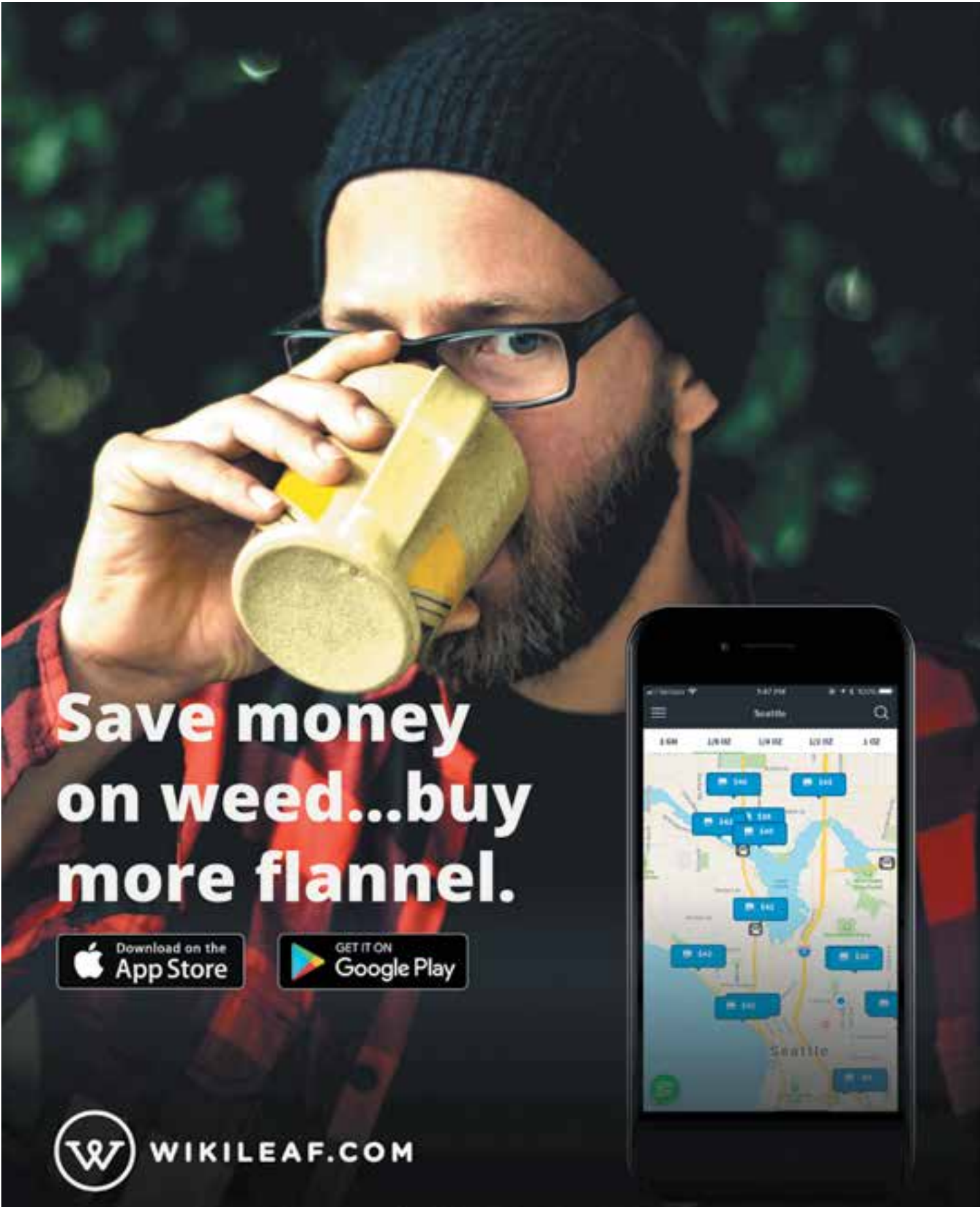
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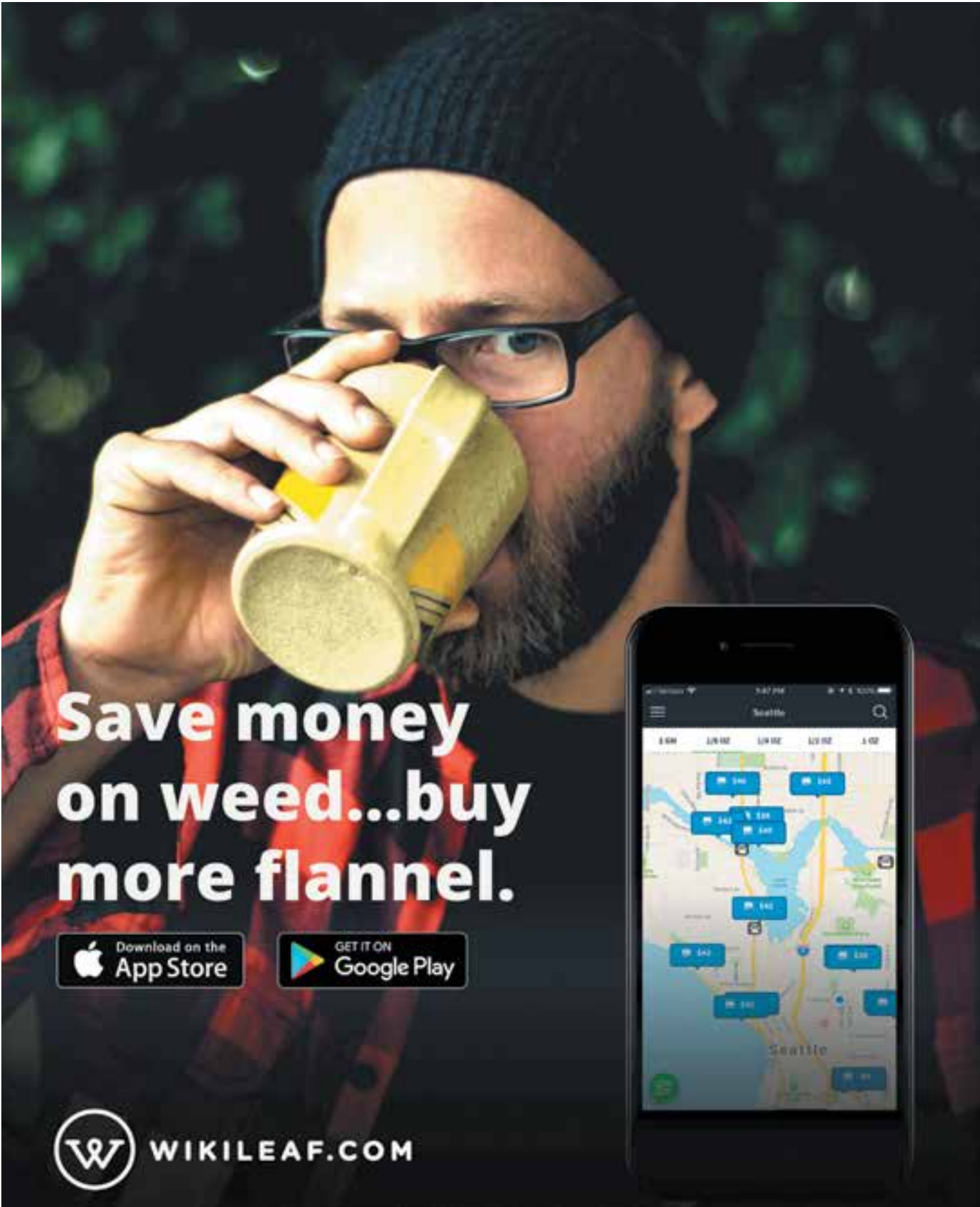
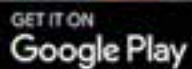
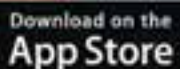
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A smartphone displaying a map of Seattle with various locations marked by blue icons and labels, likely representing cannabis dispensaries or delivery points.



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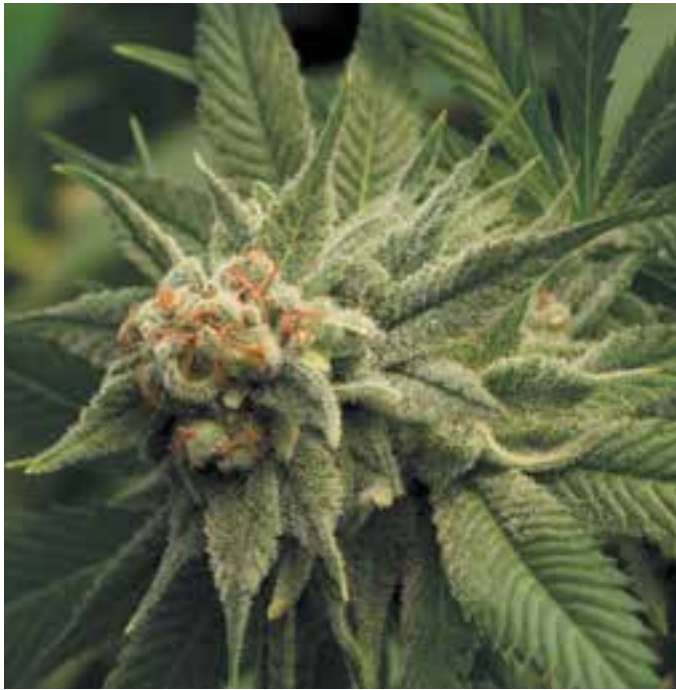
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9 Lb. Hammer grown by Boggy Boon

.....

In the American myth of John Henry—as told by Johnny Cash, Bruce Springsteen, and Woody Guthrie—the railroad worker supposedly used a nine-pound hammer to outpace a steam-powered drill, only to die with the hammer in his hand when his hammer-pounding task was complete. The idea for this strain is it's supposed to deliver sedating effects as heavy as Henry's hammer. Boggy Boon's version delivers the necessary heavy hitting results, with deep purple leaves and aromas of musty and sweet grape. It smokes smooth and delivers an immediately sedating effect. ■



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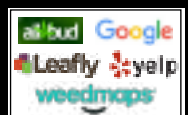
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This soup tastes better if you add a dash of white wine.

Taste-Testing New Edibles

A mix of new, strange, delicious, and dank weed foods that ranged from “Wow, that’s delicious” to “Wouldn’t eat that again.”

BY AMBER CORTES

It used to be that edibles got me intensely high or I felt nothing at all. But since legalization, edibles have come a long way, baby—in the quality of flavors, in the standardization of doses, and in the range of foods available. That gross weed aftertaste that I remember from my college years is now long gone: I didn’t detect it in any of the products I tried. But which of them tasted the most delicious? How stoned did they

make me feel? What did the friends I shared them with think? A taste test was in order.

Tomato Basil Soup by American Baked Co.

Seattle-based American Baked Co. has been on my savory radar ever since I bit into their mouthwatering cheddar-cheese crackers, so I was excited to try their tomato basil soup. You

get a powdered mix of tomato, dried milk, onion, carrot, basil, and other herbs and spices packaged in a small box. “An obvious camping companion,” says their website, since you just add two cups of hot water and you’re good to go.

Or so I thought! My first attempt at making weed soup was using boiled water in the microwave at work. (My colleague Heidi Groover, watching nearby, called it “the most *Stranger*►

◀ thing that ever happened.”) The powder didn’t quite seem to dissolve, and the whole thing looked grainy and tasted bland. Then I remembered the advice of my budtender, who said he liked to add a dash of white wine. Another coworker suggested I doll it up with a touch of cream. So on my second attempt, I did both, which seemed to do the trick. The soup was pretty good! Campbell’s-level good, not DeLaurenti-level good. But still! Weed soup!

It certainly gave me a better-than-pretty-good high. For reasons I got too high to remember, I ended up sitting on the floor instead of the couch while eating dinner with friends, simultaneously spaced out and happily chatty, feeling mighty relaxed but also social.

Lori’s Sea Salt & Cracked Pepper Potato Chips

I was pretty curious about these chips made by Craft Elixirs, having seen them in a couple of shops around town—and given the enduring love story between stoners and potato chips. “Yeah, um, those are okay,” the budtender said, in a not-so-super-psyched-about-them way, when I asked what he thought. I got them anyway. But, kids, you should always, always listen to your budtender.

Do you like a little salt with your salt? Then these chips are for you! They’re the potato chips that don’t really taste like potato chips but more like a salt ▶



These are very, very salty.

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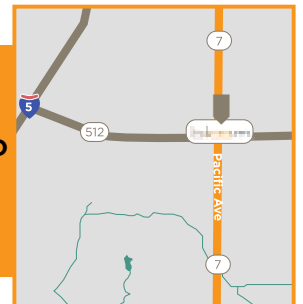
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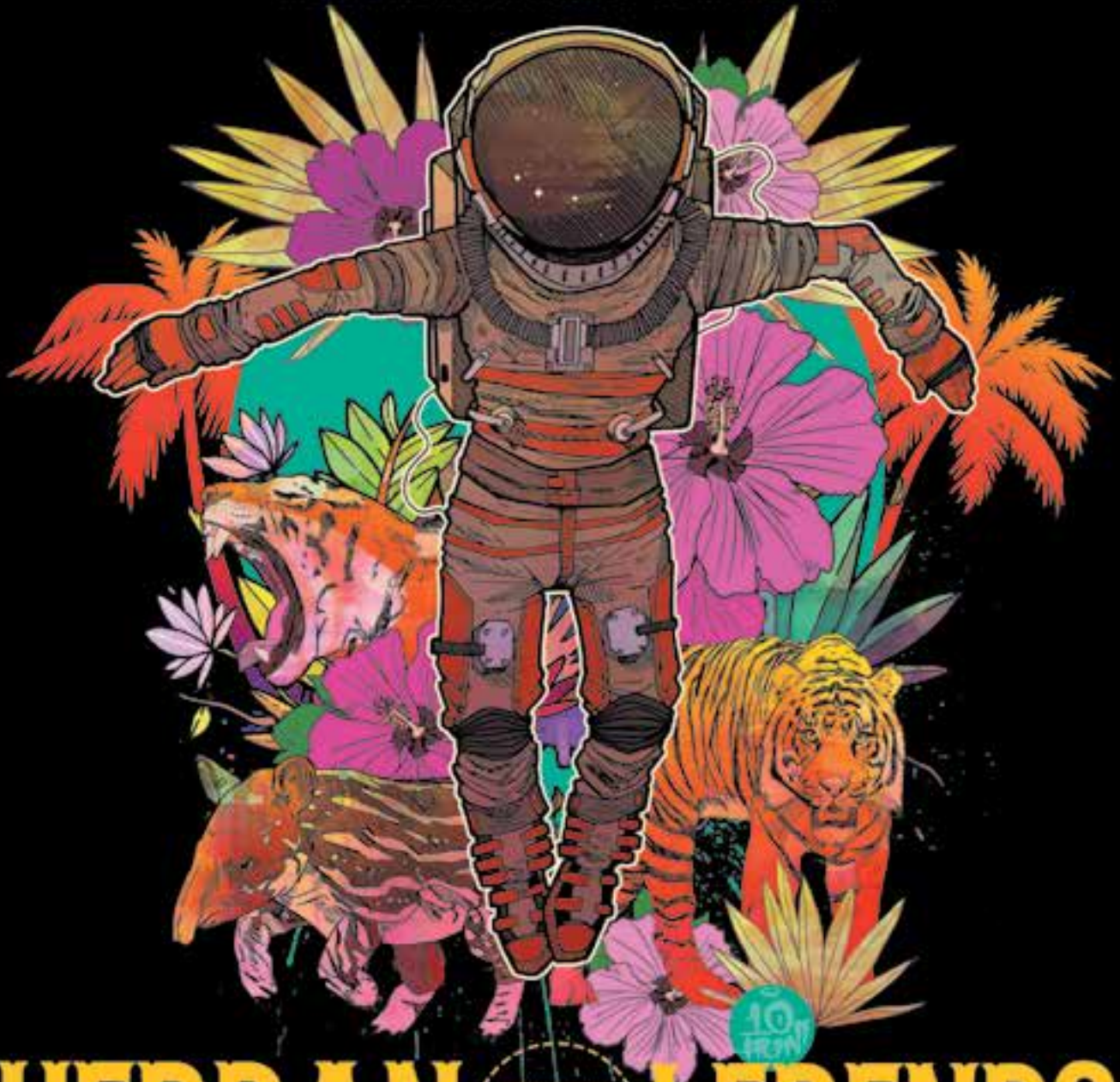
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A woody,
musky mixer.



◀lick. Because the entire bag of chips has 10 milligrams of THC, I ate the whole thing in one sitting. And sitting is what I continued to do for about an hour, not really feeling anything more than a slight drowsy body buzz.

Legal Lemon Ginger Sparkling Tonic by Mirth Provisions

I thought the budtender might have been exaggerating just a little when he said he mixed this sassy, deliciously tart soda with vodka and lime to make the “best Moscow Mule of my life.” But after trying it, I could see where he was coming from. Lightly carbonated and perfect when splashed in with vodka or gin, Legal Lemon Ginger Sparkling Tonic would be at home on the shelves of any self-respecting hipster bar. And Mirth Provisions also makes it in four other flavors—Rainier Cherry, Pomegranate, Cranberry, and Espresso Mocha—giving this line of products superior mixing potential.

The craft-beverage vibe of all-natural and locally sourced ingredients was impossible not to notice. Words like “woody” and “musky” were batted around by my companions as they sipped. There was a consensus that the ginger taste was strong but not overwhelming. The whole bottle is 40 milligrams of THC, and it comes with a helpful measuring cup to control dosage, which I promptly ignored. I just poured a bunch in and judged it by taste. I should have thought that through a little more.

At first, the chillaxed indica high was quite conducive to a funk-filled evening of music at the Neptune (Seun Kuti was playing). Nothing like some weed soda and Afrobeat to quench your stoner thirst for jams. But a couple of hours into it, I had the overwhelming urge to jump into my jammies and proceed straight to bed. ▶



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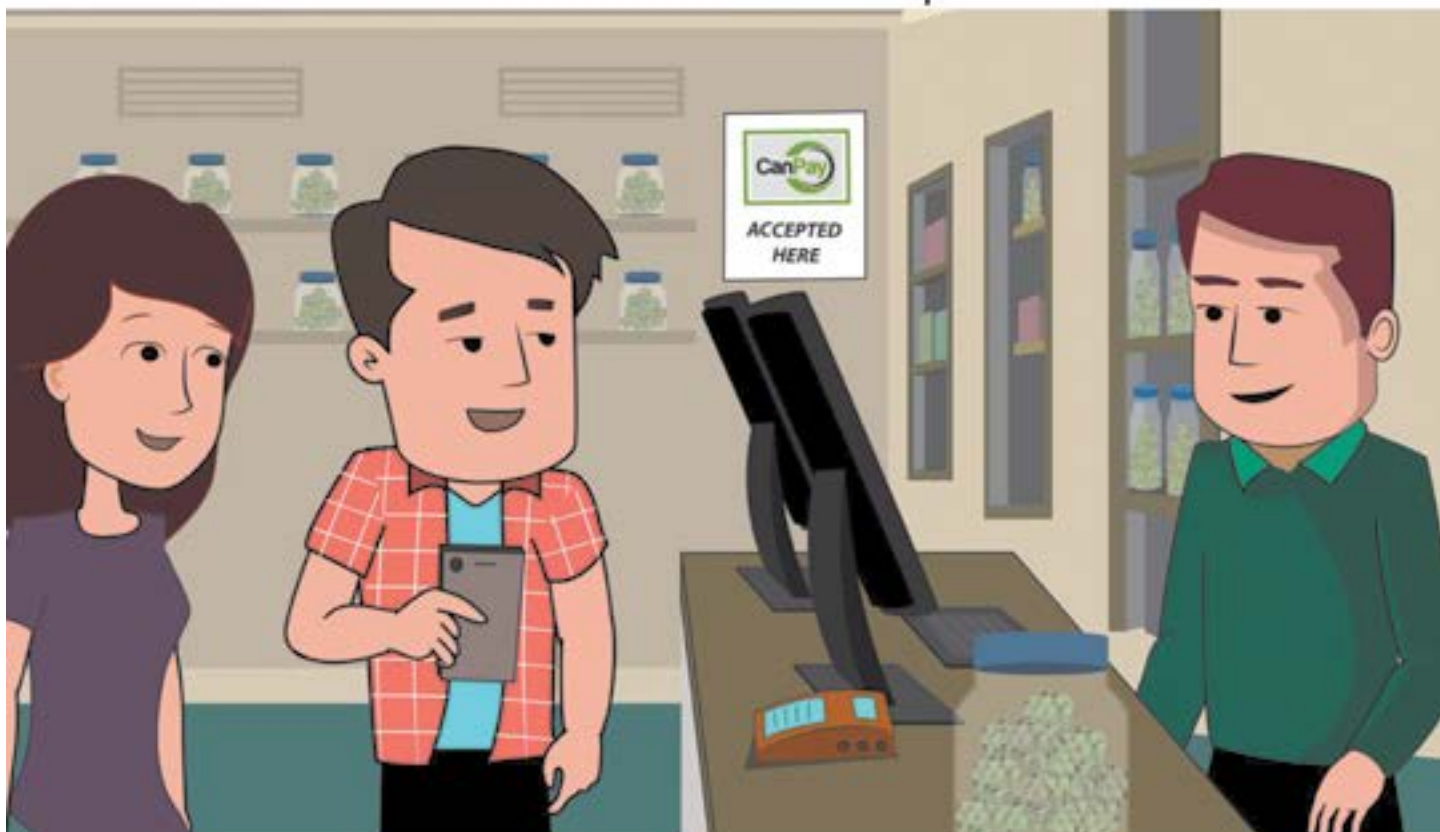
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CBD Raspberry Fruit Jellies by Goodship

When it comes to edibles, your mileage may vary—at least that was my experience taking Goodship's raspberry jellies with two friends. I shared these small, chewy, raspberry-flavored jellies with my partner and his roommate before we went to the Crocodile to see R&B sensation Moses Sumney. The jellies are coated in sugar, giving them a nice texture, and the raspberry isn't too sweet. The consistency is more like a thick fruit roll-up than a gummy bear.

My partner is pretty sensitive to THC, but likes CBD, so I thought these half-THC, half-CBD jellies (5 milligrams of each per jelly) might be a good middle ground. While I was on my way to nice body high and feeling ready to relax, my partner was looking rather pale. He'd had one jelly and one beer. "Are you okay?" I asked him. "I'm stoned," he said. "Good stoned or bad stoned?" I asked. To that, he said he felt nauseated and excused himself to the bathroom. Oh, dear.

Despite the fact that the person I loved the most in the world was puking in the bathroom, I was having a pretty good time! My whole body felt warm and slightly flushed, and I was feeling mellow and loose as a goose, enjoying Sumney's sweet and silky vocals. And while my partner had a strong reaction, his roommate said she felt nothing at all. We'd each eaten the same amount. Edibles, go figure! ▶



These jellies are half THC and half CBD.



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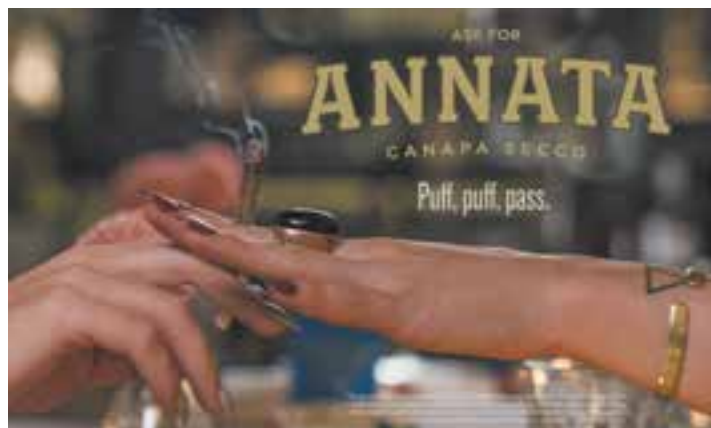
This was the best new snack I tried—potato chips wrapped in chocolate!

Couch Potatoes by Journeyman

It's always nice when an edible product completely lives up to its name. Couch Potatoes are basically little potato chip pieces wrapped in a square of yummy milk chocolate. Of all the items on this list, it turned out to be my favorite.

Along with cookies and fruit tarts, Couch Potatoes are made by Journeyman right here in Seattle. You buy a bag that says "100 mg" in large lettering across the top, and inside are 10 individually wrapped pieces with 10 milligrams of THC. The treats taste way more sweet than salty—more "like a Rice Krispies treat or a Kit Kat," said a friend who tried one.

Inspired by the couch in the name, I planned ahead and placed everything I needed within reach of my sofa—water, phone, a Casio SK-1 keyboard in case I felt creative, snacks, an iPad loaded up with games and apps, more snacks, the Chromecast queued to the season premiere of *Broad City*. I was so ready! But I didn't really get to do any of those things because when the high kicked in, I got to feeling rather daydreamy and stared at the tree outside my window for about an hour. Well played, Journeyman, well played. ■



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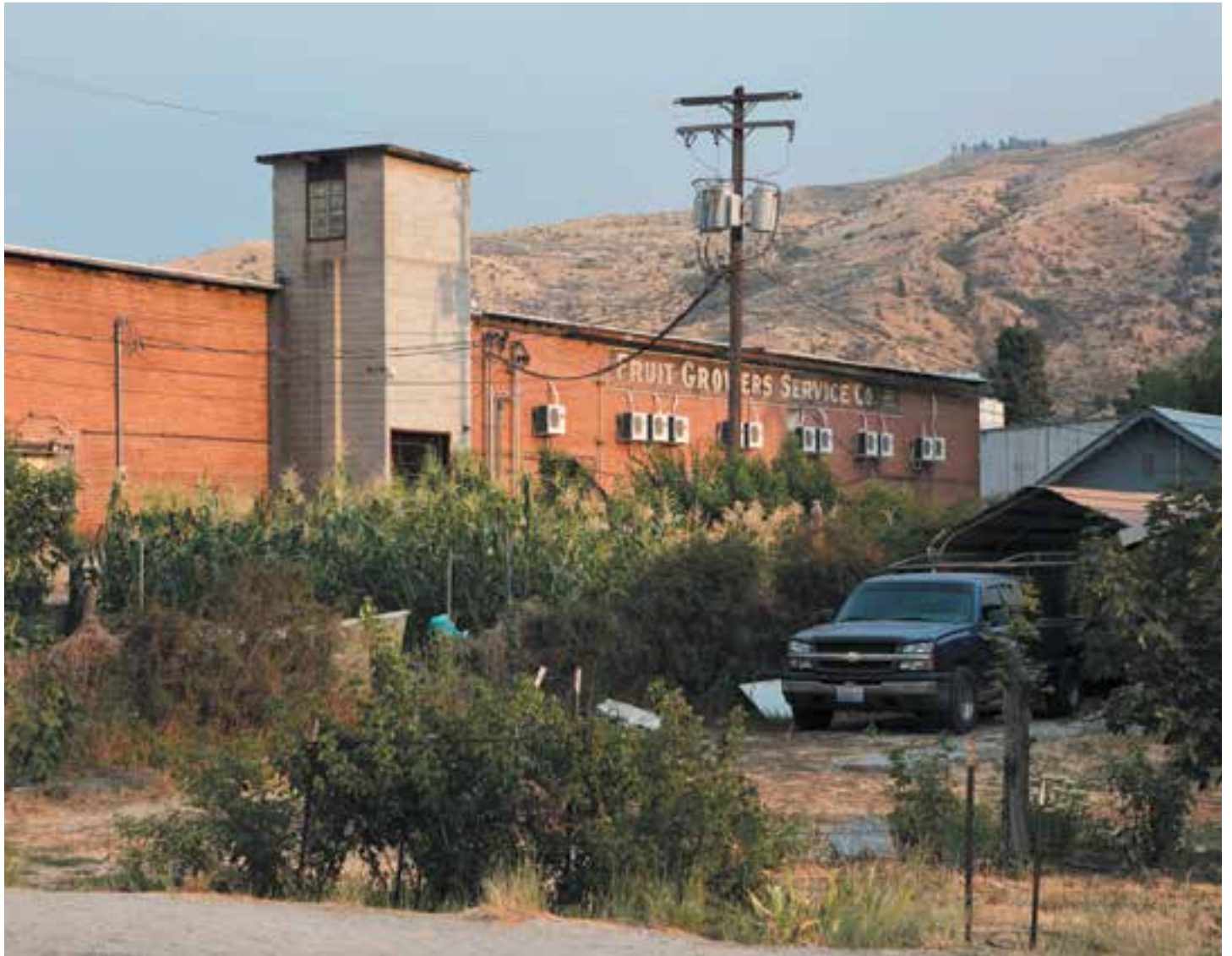
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The old Collins Fruit Co. building where Josh Bitterman invested \$1 million to start a pot farm.

Something Smells Weird Here

Why are farming counties in Eastern Washington shutting down pot farms?

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY LESTER BLACK

Not long ago, an entrepreneurial young farmer named Josh Bitterman spent a million dollars transforming an old brick building in Chelan County into a state-of-the-art indoor pot farm. You would think a self-professed agricultural capital like Chelan County would celebrate Bitterman's investment. After all, keeping young people in the farming business is increasingly difficult. And the former fruit-packing building for Collins Fruit Co., in the tiny town of Monitor, had sat empty for years, a victim of the corporate consolidation of fruit farming in Washington State. ►



"I'm a fourth-generation farmer, and I've invested my whole life savings," Bitterman says. "And they just fucking took it, like nothing."



None of the 25 active pot farms in Chelan County—including Greenleaf Producers, above—are compliant with the county's new rules.

◀ What fruit farming could not fill, cannabis farming could.

But Chelan County's leaders did not celebrate Bitterman's investment. In fact, they did the opposite, voting unanimously this past August to make Bitterman's farm illegal.

"I'm a fourth-generation farmer, and I've invested my whole life savings into it. And they just fucking took it, like nothing," Bitterman said.

The August vote came after a rocky three years for legal weed in Chelan County. The same conditions that make Chelan County great for farming apples also make it a natural fit for growing pot, and cannabis producers quickly set up farms in the valley after the state started issuing permits for legal pot in 2014. At first, the county welcomed the growth and placed few restrictions on where or how the farms should be set up.

By August of 2016, there were 23 producers or processors in Chelan County, but the rush of pot farmers into the valley, with little regulation from county government, quickly caused problems in the area's conservative communities. Neighbors to pot farms started complaining to county commissioners about increased traffic, nighttime security lights, and the dank smell of pot harvesting. The county then enacted a

moratorium on any new pot farms, and in January of 2016 told any existing farms that they had two years to amortize their investments and be out of the county. That law said all weed farming would be banned by 2018.

Now the county commissioners say their August vote was a compromise: They will no longer

**Chelan County is
deeply conservative—
Trump won 54 percent of
the vote—and cannabis is
not widely accepted here.**

outright ban cannabis farming, but farms must comply with a new set of zoning and building requirements. But the county's pot growers say the new law is effectively a ban. None of the existing farms meet the law's requirements, and only a handful have a reasonable chance of upgrading their facilities into compliance.

It remains to be seen if Bitterman or any of the county's other farmers will be able to stay in business, but the plight of Chelan County pot farmers has been repeated across the eastern part of our state. Bans or moratoriums on pot farms have been debated or put in place in Douglas, Okanogan, Grant, Yakima, Benton, and Spokane Counties.

These fights across the Republican-dominated section of our state are filled with irony. Many of these conservative counties have passed laws protecting farmers from exactly the kind of neighborly complaints that are now being used to justify draconian farming regulations on pot. Try to complain about the lights of a 4 a.m. hay harvest or the smell of a feedlot to the Chelan County government, and you'll be told to move back to Seattle. But complain about the smell of freshly grown pot, and the county commission will shut your neighbor's cannabis farm down.

The irony drives deeper when you consider that those laws protecting agriculture were put in place precisely because places like Chelan County have depended on the income from farming for decades. Now a promising new crop comes to Wenatchee Valley—the county's pot ▶



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C-Train (Choco-Train or Chocolate Train)



Indica

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Sativa

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Salmon Berry



Indica

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Girl Scout Cookies CBD



CBD

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◀farmers sold more than \$12.7 million of pot in 2016 alone—and the farmer-dominated county commission decides to drive it out because of a harmless odor.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Washington counties that have embraced (or at least tolerated) pot have seen big returns. Last year, Spokane County grew \$62 million of legal pot, more than any other county in the state.

What could cause three county commissioners, two of whom made their money selling tree fruit, to effectively ban the most promising crop in town?

Clocks in Wenatchee haven't struck noon yet, but it's already close to 90 degrees on this sunny August morning. A crowd of about 30 people pour out of the chambers of the Chelan County Board of Commissioners, walking down the white front steps with a mix of anger, dejection, and apathy on their faces. No one seems surprised by what happened inside.

Two women stand to the side of the crowd and engage in a terse conversation that quickly escalates over the crowd's dull murmur. The older of the two women yells something about "wasting her time" and walks away. Her voice and eyes sharpen with the anger of facing a foe that lives down the street. I later find out the two women are neighbors—one owns a pot farm, the other an orchard—and their families have spent generations living within a mile of each other on an orchard-covered mountain.

It's August 22, and five minutes earlier the three county commissioners had made their decision. In nervous and uneasy voices, they did what few rural politicians of an agricultural county would dare to do: They unanimously voted to tighten regulations around their neighbors' farms so that few, if any, will remain. Undercover police sat in rows of chairs in the commission chambers, and murmurs of "shame, shame, shame" filled the room as the three yes votes were tallied.

None of the 25 actively working

pot farms will be compliant with the new rules for zoning, lighting, setbacks, and odor control.

Only a handful of the farms have even a chance of modifying their operations to comply with the regulations, according to Caitlein Ryan, co-owner of Seven Hills Farms and president of the Central Washington Growers Association, a trade group of local pot producers.

"I think a lot of people are pretty brokenhearted today, to be honest," Ryan said on the steps of the commission building. "They've effectively banned everybody and implemented spot zoning."

Dale Foreman, a Wenatchee attorney representing most of the pot farmers in a lawsuit seeking damages from the county, said the new regulations amount to an effective ban on pot farming.

"The rules that they adopted on the 22nd are designed to prevent anybody from succeeding. It would be surprising if any of the plaintiffs can thread the needle of the rules that the county imposed. Which I think is their plan. The county [government] wants to drive the cannabis industry out of Chelan County," Foreman said.

Roy Arms, another co-owner of Seven Hill Farms, which grows flower branded as Boggy Boon, said he was one of the lucky entrepreneurs: Thanks to the existing zoning of his farm, there is a chance that he might be able to comply with the new rules. Arms vowed to keep fighting to stay in business, even if it costs hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional investment.

"I've invested enough time in this, missed my family enough, that this can't be for nothing," Arms said. "No matter what the county does, I'm still going to keep at this. I'm doing this for my kids, to give them a better future."

The commissioners are using their political power to fight against the natural forces that make the Wenatchee Valley, which lies at the heart of Chelan County, very attractive to pot farmers. Long days of consistent sunshine, rivers raging with water from snowy ▶



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Roy Arms, co-owner of Seven Hills Farms, says, "I've invested enough time in this, missed my family enough, that this can't be for nothing."

◀ Cascade peaks, and relatively cheap land make it an ideal place to grow cannabis.

But Chelan County is also a deeply conservative place—Trump won 54 percent of the vote in 2016, and Obama was never able to carry the county—and cannabis, or marijuana as it is more often called here, is not widely accepted. All three commissioners who voted to extinguish the local cannabis production industry said the morality of pot had nothing to do with how they voted, but each commissioner also told me they voted against legalization in 2012 and did not have a single family member that used cannabis.

When I talked to Commissioner Kevin Overbay on the porch of his house, in a subdivision cut out of former orchard fields and perched on a bluff overlooking the Seven Hills Farms, he said his time in law enforcement arresting people on pot charges didn't affect his decision to tighten regulations on pot farms.

"I was a state trooper for 25 years, and I did not vote for legalization. I have a way of separating the personal from the political," Overbay said. "My personal opinion has nothing to do with decision making. The fact that I live above a farm did not affect my decision."

Overbay added, "Do I enjoy that I can't open my windows or go on my

deck without smelling marijuana? No."

He said he didn't think anyone in his family had ever used cannabis.

That's the same thing Michelle Gutzwiler told me. Her family's house in Wenatchee Heights is surrounded by cherry orchards, some of them owned by her family, and she has been one of the most vocal critics of pot farms in the county. She complains about the traffic and crime that pot farms abutting her orchards have brought; in October of last year, a break-in at a pot farm led to a gunfight and high-speed chase down the road her family lives on. But she is most adamant about the dangers of smelling her neighboring pot farms. Gutzwiler said she is allergic to the smell of pot and has had frequent allergic attacks since the farms showed up.

"I don't think anybody is going to be totally safe from it [pot's odor] at all. You go through town and smell people smoking it all the time, but I would like to be safe in my home," Gutzwiler said. "I went to an allergist here in Wenatchee because I was having attacks where my throat would close up and I still get attacks. I tried calling an ambulance once and I was not able to speak, so it affects me a lot."

Gutzwiler and her fellow neighbors' complaints about the smell ▶

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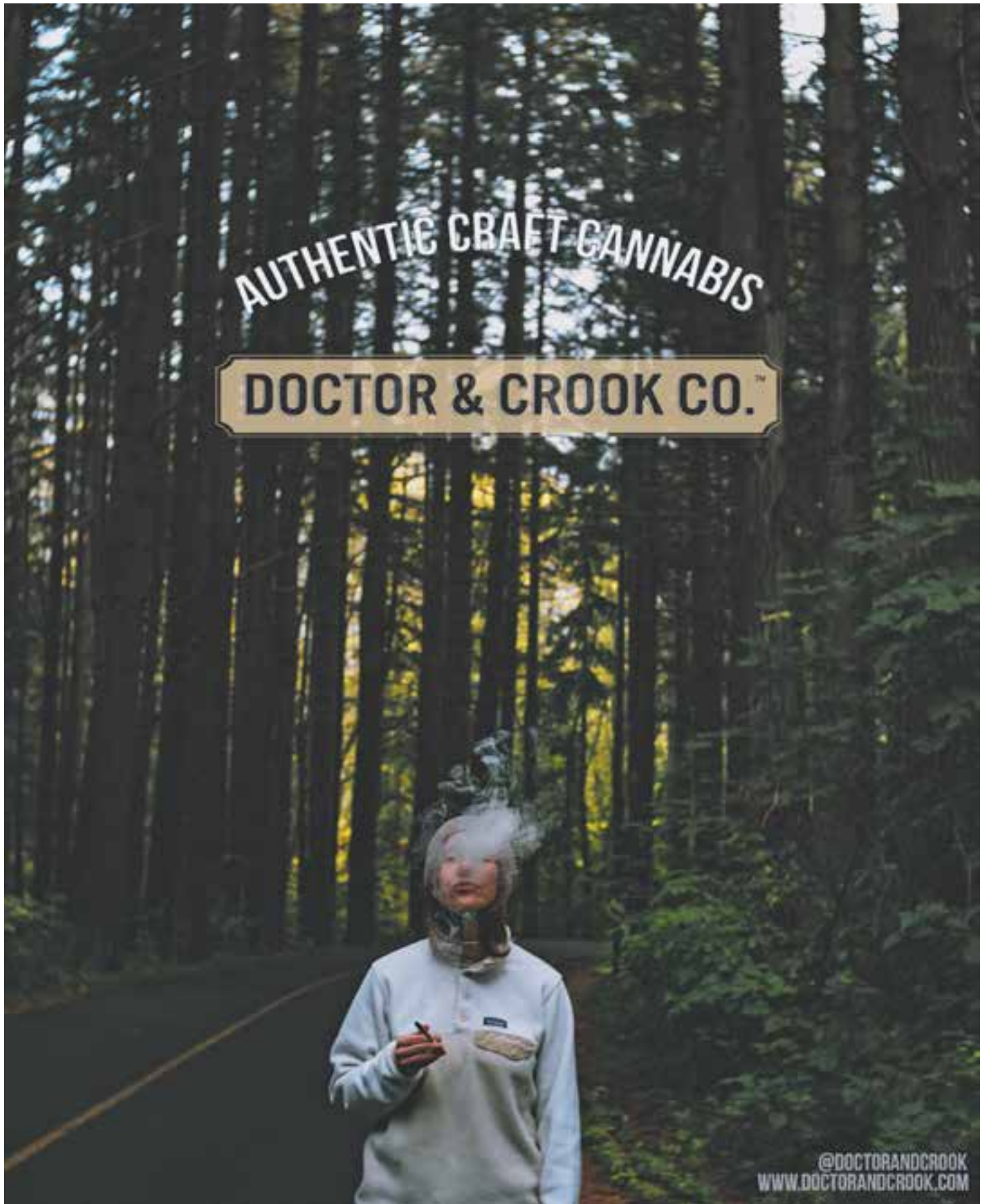


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Michelle Gutzwiler, a vocal critic of pot farms, claims she is allergic to the smell.

◀ of the neighboring pot farms convinced the commission to enact its new, tighter rules on cannabis farming. The county will no longer allow large outdoor cannabis farms, and any small outdoor farms will need to keep their pot plants at least 1,000 feet back from the farm's property line. That's three football fields from the edge of any neighboring property.

It's hard to believe that the smell of pot has led to such stringent rulemaking in communities accustomed to the externalities of agriculture. Hops growing, which produces a pungent smell comparable to pot (the two related plants contain a very similar set of aromatic terpenes), has no such restrictions in Chelan County and is hardly a controversial crop in Washington State, where more than 65 million pounds of hops were grown last year.

And while Gutzwiler has no medical documentation that smelling pot affects her health—she said her allergist told her there was no such test for being allergic to pot's aromas—there have been thousands of documented cases of people becoming sick from the kind of tree fruit farming that surrounds Gutzwiler's property on all sides.

Farm workers and those who live in farming communities fall ill every year from pesticides drifting from Washington's farms. The Washington State Department of

Health reported more than 1,000 pesticide-illness cases from 2007 to 2011. And a report released this year by Columbia Legal Services, a nonprofit legal advocacy organization, found that 90 percent of the people exposed to pesticides from farms were not directly employed by the farms.

There are no rules that require tree fruit farms to be set 1,000 feet back from property lines.

But with these kinds of health effects, wouldn't tree fruit farming be the kind of issue this activist county commission might take up? If the smell of pot is so abhorrent, wouldn't the dangerous drift of pesticides from orchards be something the three commissioners who clamped down on pot farming might want to stop?

That's unlikely, and not only because two out of the three current commissioners—Keith Goehner and Doug England—made their living from tree fruit orchards. They're unlikely to enact local laws infringing on farmers' rights because the county has legal protections for farmers. Chelan County, like many agricultural counties in Washington, has a "Code of the West" resolution, which warns prospective residents that "life in the country is different from life in the city" and those moving to Chelan shouldn't be surprised to feel the effects of farming on their land.

The 2002 resolution warns ▶

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“There’s a broad tolerance for pesticide drift, which hospitalizes dozens of people every year,” one pot grower says, referring to tree fruit farming. “But the smell of cannabis leaving a property is completely intolerable. So there’s obvious hypocrisy and a double standard.”

◀would-be complainers: “Agriculture is an important business in Chelan County. If you choose to live among the orchards, farms, and ranches of our rural countryside, do not expect county government to intervene in the normal day-to-day operations of your agribusiness neighbors.”

Worried about the possibly toxic pesticide drift from a nearby orchard? The county’s code says you should expect this: “You may be subject to spray drift or over spray. You may be sensitive to these substances and many people actually have severe allergic reactions.”

Tired of the fecal odor from a nearby farm? Get over it, the code tells you: “Animals and their manure can cause objectionable odors. What else can we say?”

It would seem like the complaints about pot farms would fit squarely under the protections of this “Code of the West,” but they don’t, because of a technicality: The county refuses to label pot farmers as participating in agriculture.

“There’s a broad tolerance for pesticide drift, which hospitalizes dozens of people every year,” said David Rice, one of the owners of San Juan Sun Grown, a farm about a mile from Gutzwiller’s house. “But the smell of cannabis leaving a property is completely intolerable. So there’s obvious hypocrisy and a

double standard when it comes to the treatment of it.”

Every person I spoke to who complained about cannabis growers in Chelan County said that it wasn’t about their distaste for pot that made them complain and seek to shut the industry down, it was only the effects associated with the plant’s growers, from the smell to the traffic. But if there’s no evidence that pot farms are negatively affecting the health of their neighbors, why go so far out of their way to shut them down?

The only rational explanation left that I can see is also the simplest—they simply don’t like pot.

The people running the Chelan County government don’t mince words when it comes to the question of whether or not marijuana cultivation qualifies as agriculture. The third paragraph of their latest cannabis zoning ordinance states that “cannabis is not an agricultural product,” and all three commissioners who unanimously voted for the ordinance told me that the state of Washington also considers pot not to be an agricultural crop.

The truth is more complicated. The state government has largely stayed out of the debate over whether or not pot is an agricultural ▶



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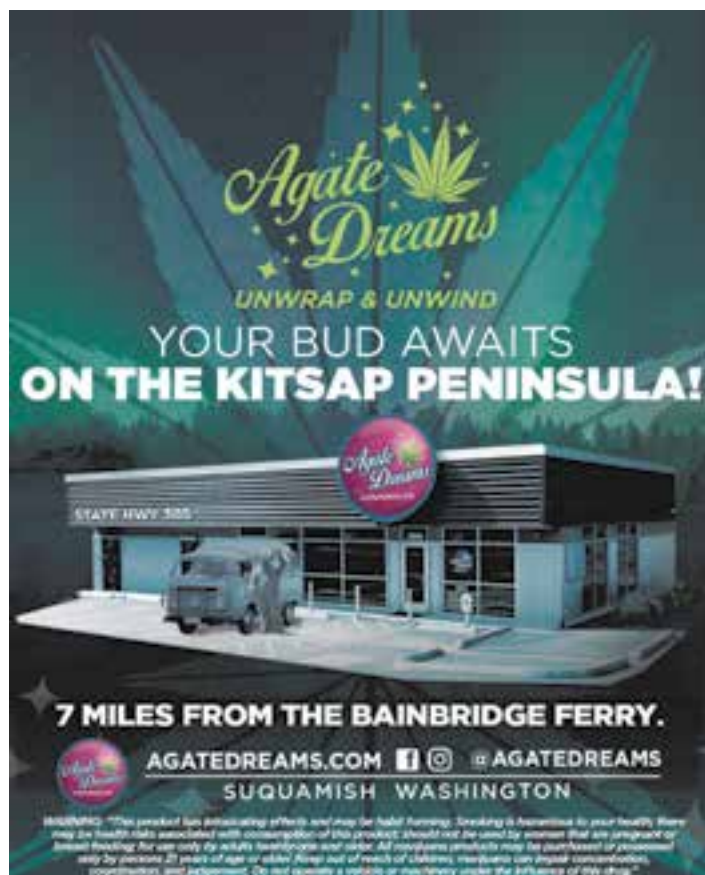
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product. The state laws that authorize the production of legal cannabis make no mention of pot being or not being an agricultural product. The state, however, does not consider marijuana eligible for any tax breaks or incentives otherwise open to agriculture. The Department of Revenue's website states: "None of Washington's tax preferences for agricultural products or property tax incentives apply to marijuana businesses."

But the state government consistently regulates pot as if it were an agricultural product. That's probably because cannabis is a plant, because the sun shines on pot plants just like it does on pear trees, and because the people who grow cannabis are farmers. In short, eligibility for farming tax breaks doesn't suddenly change the nature of what pot farmers are doing.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is one of the most active state agencies in regulating pot. The WSDA's Chemical and Hop Laboratory in Yakima conducts the state's pesticide testing on pot; the WSDA provides input on pot regulations and cannabis testing labs, as state law requires; and the WSDA runs the state's industrial hemp program. Moreover, the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries considers workers at both indoor and outdoor pot farms to be agricultural employees for industrial insurance purposes.

Some state legislators want to clarify that pot is in fact a crop. A bill was introduced in the legislature last year that would explicitly classify marijuana as a farm product and marijuana farming as an agricultural activity. Sponsored by three Republicans and six Democrats, the bill failed to make it out of committee. Washington is behind other states when it comes to pot's agricultural status; California and Oregon both define cannabis as an agricultural crop.

Lara Kaminsky, the executive director of the Cannabis Alliance, a pot business trade group, said the insistence by some people in the state that cannabis isn't agricul-

ture stems from years of anti-pot propaganda.

"I get that this is a deep and difficult issue. The war on drugs left many scars, and the propaganda got really deep into our DNA. But we have to start with the truth, and part of that is cannabis is a plant and cultivation of that plant is agriculture," Kaminsky said. "Let's just call it what it is."

And it appears that some of the county commissioners in Chelan County were calling marijuana an agricultural activity when the pot farms were first coming to the county. Bitterman, the pot farmer who renovated the old Collins Fruit packing warehouse into a pot farm, said he was assured that his business would be treated as agricultural.

"I put my license on stall because they put that moratorium on. And then they lifted it and said we are going to treat you like AG [agriculture], so then I went and got a warehouse that was zoned AG, and got a license when there was no moratorium," Bitterman said. "I asked the county what I had to do, and they said, 'No problem, just get permits.' And now we're being shut down."

The new regulations require all large pot farms like Bitterman's to be in areas zoned industrial, and the old Collins Fruit warehouse is zoned agricultural, so Bitterman's farm is now illegal. Bitterman isn't the only Chelan County farmer saying that they were assured the local government would treat cannabis as agriculture.

According to Dale Foreman, the attorney representing most of the county's pot farms in a lawsuit seeking damages for the county's behavior, some of the farmers even have a tape of the county commissioners saying that pot will be treated as a crop. Unfortunately for the farmers, they didn't notify the commissioners that they were being recorded, so a judge has thrown out the evidence from an early hearing on the case. Foreman said they will still be able to provide witnesses to testify that they heard the statements being made. ▶

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◀ “They recorded this, but it is against the rules to tape record somebody without their knowledge,” Foreman said, referring to state law. “There are people who will testify that they were in the room and heard the commissioners say that this is an agricultural crop.”

Kaminsky said even if the state legislature did pass a law explicitly classifying pot as an agricultural product, counties like Chelan County could still treat local producers differently.

“It’s not something where it would be you just flip a switch and it makes everything better, the counties would still have a lot of zoning ability even if we were considered agriculture, but the idea is that we would have more legitimacy in terms of the smells that the plant gives off.”

Chelan County is far from the only local government in Eastern Washington that has an uneasy relationship with pot production. But some, like the Spokane Valley City Council, have learned that treating the legal weed growers like a legitimate industry has benefits. Spokane Valley grew almost \$3.4 million of legal weed in August alone, bringing a whole wave of economic activity to the city of less than 100,000.

However, the city wasn’t always so open to pot. In 2016, Spokane Valley passed a moratorium on any new cannabis businesses, both retail and production, and the city council was considering going further when they were invited to tour Grow Op Farms, one of the city’s producers. Rob McKinley, CEO of Grow Op Farms, said touring the \$10 million facility quickly changed the politicians’ attitudes.

“There was one guy who put a mask on because he thought he was going to get high just walking around the building. But by the end, you had people who were maybe standoffish about the process taking photos of plants and buds,” McKinley said. “By the time they’re done, they see more than 300 happy workers, we’re one of

the biggest employers in the valley, and they went back and voted away the moratorium.”

You can already see the economic impact of legal pot in Chelan County, especially in the small community of Monitor, where Bitterman has set up shop. The town itself doesn’t get any share of the state’s excise tax on pot, but it’s hard to miss the impact of that much production happening in a sleepy community on the shoulder of a highway. Dozens of pot employees have been commuting into the town every day and shopping at the local grocery store. The old fruit packing plant, which was empty until pot came on to the scene, became a productive property with an increased value that benefits its neighbors.

But those economic impacts aren’t likely to hang around if the county government enforces its latest round of regulations.

Doug England, one of the commissioners who voted for the new law, and a tree fruit farmer himself, said he voted on the ordinance with no regard for how it impacts farms like Bitterman’s.

“There will undoubtedly be some [pot farms] that won’t be able to make the standards. We’ve made a particular effort to not take that into account and to not consider that one way or another. We’re aware that there will be an economic effect. But again, the regulations need to be right no matter what it costs us one way or another,” England said.

The new regulations will certainly cost the county’s taxpayers money, and not only from lost business activity. The legal bills associated with the multiple lawsuits filed against the county are likely to run into the hundreds of thousands in just attorney’s fees, and that’s not including any damages that will be paid out if any of the farmers prevail in court.

If the farmers are successful in exacting damages from the county, they will have completed a ridiculous full circle: farmers getting paid damages by a farming county because the county can’t accept that the farmers are farming. ■

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Smoke 'Em If You Got 'Em

BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

ACROSS

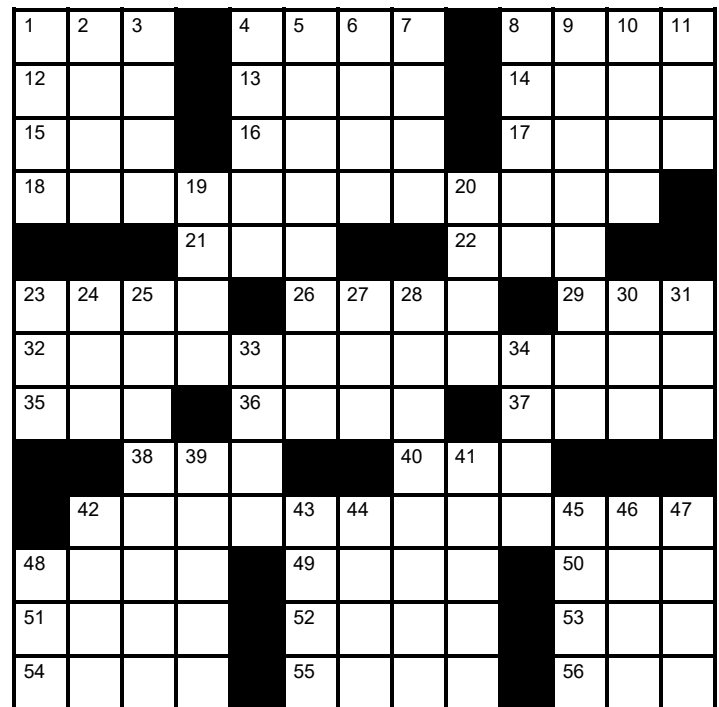
1. Weed purchase
4. Moroccan weed
8. GM sticker datum
12. Hello, in Portuguese
13. You may not believe it's not butter
14. Forward, a compound; backward, unaccompanied
15. ____-Wan Kenobi
16. LP rate
17. At the proper time
18. Thing that's harder to smoke out of than, say, an apple?
21. Room in the house, for short
22. Unlikely ballet dancer
23. Elite 8 org.
26. Colorful old Apple
29. Celtics, on scoreboards
32. Debate about how large one can make a thing to smoke out of?
35. Latin salutation
36. Crack
37. Dismisses unceremoniously
38. Oahu florist's creation
40. Results of big hits?
42. Thing that's hard to smoke because it's already high?
48. High purity heroin
49. Statistician Silver that I like to think is stoned when crunch-

ing his numbers

50. Certain compass point
51. Title role for Peter Fonda
52. Celine who was totally stoned when she sang "Because You Loved Me"
53. About 70 percent of the Earth
54. Treat rudely
55. Donations for the disadvantaged
56. Weed

DOWN

1. Dunderhead
2. Actress Jessica
3. Fail at dieting
4. Jazzy Lena
5. Actor who played drug lord Tony Montoya
6. Sch. terms
7. Where you might go if you OD: Abbr.
8. News groups
9. Old-fashioned tobacco holder you can put your weed in
10. Massage, in a way
11. Practice, as a trade
19. Likely person in Lebanon
20. Inlet in Scotland
23. Sports league that at least 80 percent of its members smoke weed
24. Western ____ (history class)
25. Crow's-feet, e.g.
27. Lion logo studio
28. Fundamentally
30. Mine-car load
31. Part of PBS: Abbr.
33. Award for Tony Kushner
34. Freedom from pain
39. Kin of fleurets
41. "____ dinner?"
42. ____ sci (coll. major)
43. 50 Cent's "____ Club"



44. Thin joint
 45. Weed
 46. Banjo's place, in a song
 47. Give birth on the farm
 48. "Kind" weed network
-
- Too stoned to finish? Got 'em all and want to confirm your mastery? Find the answers at thestranger.com/fw17puzzle*



Elaine Lin



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